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SEMIOTICS OF THE END: BOREDOM AT THE END OF THE WORLD

NECROPOLITICS,
PHILOFICTION

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Dreams about the end of the world are not, perhaps, anymore the fruits of despair and fear alone. They are also the frolics of boredom.

It is not only when the world is evil or ugly, but when it does not matter anymore whether the world exists or not that feverish dreams of destruction surge from the depths; it is amidst yawns,

more often than whimpers and cries, that the world ends.

A friend once told me: ‘When I am bored, I would like to watch the world burn.’ The world thus ends, and it is just fantasy. That is because boredom does not really destroy anything, it does not create at all.

THE PARADOX OF BOREDOM

As Byung-Chul Han writes in *The Burnout Society*, “deep boredom is the peak of mental relaxation. A purely hectic rush produces nothing new. It reproduces and accelerates what is already available” (p. 13). Boredom is pure repetition, reproduction without finality. If boredom does in fact produce dreams of the end, it is because the end turns out to have become impossible.

Everything is a copy. All days resemble each other. Week after week, it all repeats again. Then, a thought of creation or destruction. Boredom is thus eliminated; nothingness neutralizes mere repetition. A principle of nothingness is indeed necessary to both creation and destruction; it is when the temptation of nothingness overcomes the dullness of the here-and-now that creating and destroying become possible. Boredom then, since nothing new has been generated, repeats itself.

DREAMS OF THE END

A new sort of nihilism is arising from the boredom that describes late capitalism. It is the nihilism according to which the end has lost its finality.

In a post from January 13, 2007, Mark Fisher argues that “we have ceased to imagine the end of the world just as surely as we have lost our ability to imagine the end of capitalism. Oddly, apocalyptic dread – so omnipresent during the Cold War – seems to have been extirpated from the popular unconscious. [...] If it is increasingly difficult to imagine alternatives to capitalism, that is because the world has already ended.”

Disaster movies do not anymore appeal to feelings of fear or anxiety about the future. Instead, they aim at the elimination of boredom, successfully achieved through hyperstimulation. Films such as *Sharknado* (2013) or *Godzilla vs Kong* (2021) are for children what pornography is for adults.

Dreams of the end are over. And it is not because of cynicism, but because of deep boredom: nothing is possible, because *nothing is impossible* anymore.

The dreams of the end told by disaster “porn” movies represent the ultimate simulacrum. Representations of their own nothingness. Nihilism of the end.

“The apocalypse is finished, today it is the precession of the neutral, of forms of the neutral and of indifference” (p. 160) wrote Jean Baudrillard in 1981’s *Simulacra and Simulation*. Forty years after the end, it is the apocalypse of the boring: the triumph of hyperstimulation, digital

recombination, pure repetition without difference. And as the thought of the end has been neutralized, with it, the seduction of images perishes. It is the land of boredom. The yawn and the abyss.

HYPERNOTHINGNESS

The solution to the paradox of boredom is hypernothingness: nothingness that is more than creation and destruction, reality and simulation. If dreams of the end today still depend on reality and representation, in the realm of hypernothingness the end is *both possible and impossible*.

The screen is black. There is no sound except for the whispering of the wind. As the film *The Turin Horse* (2011) is about to reach its conclusion, it is as if the world and the screen both disappear. Another nothingness then enters the dream. Absolute difference is thus introduced within nothingness itself. It is the representation of a new nothingness, which neither creates nor destructs. Instead, it returns dream to sleep.

And yet, hypernothingness does not restore reality nor its nihilistic negation. Rather, it abolishes the difference between the real and the hyperreal, boredom and its eschaton.

It is the realization of boredom at the end of the world.

0, OR THE SOUND OF THE END

The music industry is another apt example of the paradox of boredom and the nihilism of the end.

Once more, it is not hard to discover a pornographic approach to the imaginary of the end. “Sicker than the remix / Baby, let me blow your mind tonight,” then the chorus: “I can’t take it, take it, take no more / Never felt like, felt like this before / Come on get me get me on the floor.” This extract from Britney Spears’ lyrics of *Till the World Ends* (2011) follows a narrative of the end as consumerism without purpose, without finality. It is the catastrophe of meaning, where the end itself has become impossible since hyperstimulation and repetition have divested the end of its reality.

The future is no longer possible. The future does not exist if not as the simulacra of consumption, hence the pornographies of desire.

Today the future does not exist anymore if not as the reconfiguration of the past; ghosts of the past haunt the present via remixes, sequels, and remakes. The *new* almost does not mean anything anymore. Hyperstimulation and repetition already remove the possibility of the end. The paradox of boredom repostulates itself as long as nothing is created nor destructed. It is pure repetition without difference; the nothingness of the simulacra.

Again, the palliative against the nihilism of this culture of the end is hypernothingness.

A one-minute-long silence predates the end of The Caretaker’s album series *Everywhere at the End of Time* (2016–2019), partly dedicated to the memory of Mark Fisher, who disappeared in

2017. “The inability to distinguish the present from the past” (Mark Fisher’s words about The Caretaker’s sound-theory), produced by the remix and disfiguration of recordings from a long-forgotten past, now leaves space to hypernothingness.

But hypernothingness does not simply signify the end: it *creates* the end. In it, plenitude is abolished. The melancholia and nostalgia describing the recording fade away at last. Throughout this minute of hypernothingness, indifference is slowly converted into the atmosphere of the end itself.

There are no more sounds but wafts of nothingness.

The simulation of silence, rather than drawing the music to a close, further opens up a space for sleep and the ataraxy of the end. Boredom at the end of time. The hypernothingness of silence abolishes the difference between the representation of nothingness and nothingness itself, between deep listening and deep boredom.

Is it the sound of the end?

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